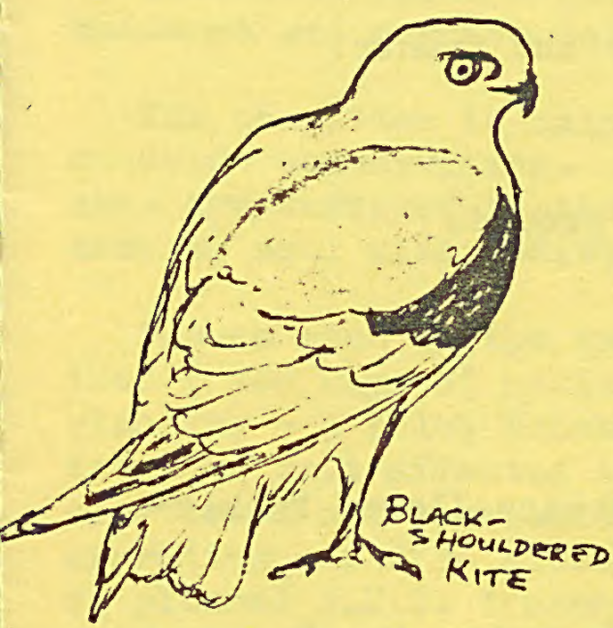
CASTLEMAINE NATURALIST 75

Dec. 82

BIRDS OF PREY

By Dinah Woods



Since we have come to live on our block of land near the Pine Plantation I have taken a special interest in the birds of prey.

I've seen quite a lot of birds of prey around, but probably the ones I most commonly see are the Black Shouldered Kites. I've seen these birds hovering over our paddock for a couple of minutes then suddenly they swoop down and when they come up again they've usually got a mouse or another small rodent in their claws. Other birds I've seen are the Wedge-tailed Eagles, but I've only seen these huge birds about two times. Once I looked through our window and saw two gigantic Wedge-tailed Eagles sitting about 10 metres away. Then slowly and gracefully they flew off getting higher and higher as they went with a couple of magpies chasing after them.

Also I think I've seen the Nankeen Kestrel or the Brown Falcon but not very much because they often get hunted off very quickly by the magpies.

One of the birds of prey we've had quite a lot of trouble with is the Raven. This bird has taken quite a few of our baby chicks (Also one time a Wedge-tailed Eagle took a chick when my dad was standing right next to them). Also the Ravens come and eat out of our compost heap, eating all the left-overs and other things so we've got quite a few shiny, healthy-looking Ravens around our place.

Dinah is the younger sister of Emma Woods whose article about birds appeared a couple of months ago. It is just possible that

her 'Brown Falcon' could be the Brown Goshawk which seems fairly common about here. As all keen 'birdos' know, identification of the raptors is very difficult!

Another point of interest in this article is the comment about the Wedge-tail taking a chicken. Has anyone heard of this happening before?

Ed.

REPORTS

After the Frosts

A few plants are beginning to show signs of life again after the frosts.

Mahogany Gums, Lemon Scented Gums } Shooting from limbs and trunks.

Wonga Vine, Hardenbergia, Melaleuca leimanii } shooting from below ground.

Birds- Redcapped Robin, North Castlemaine
White Backed Swallows, White Browed Woodswallows, Muckleford.

Mrs Mien's excursion to Clinkers Hill during the Festival proved to be a most enjoyable one and it was suggested that the Club should ask her to lead a Club excursion there, perhaps next spring.

A letter of thanks was sent to the Club from the Festival Manager, Mrs Phee Broadway, thanking the Club for its contribution to the Festival by way of a very successful outing to Muckleford, which was enjoyed by the occupants of 23 cars, despite the dearth of flowers. The Club's thanks should go to Ern Perkins who lead.

THE COMMITTEE WISHES YOU ALL A MERRY CHRISTMAS

THE ROADSIDES CONSERVATION COMMITTEE

Mr Ian Cowdell of the Roadsides Conservation committee, who was speaker at the November meeting, explained that the committee did not consist of individuals, but of organization which were involved in conservation of public works, These organizations had representatives on the committee. He himself represents the Ministry for Conservation,

Amongst their aims as the need to create an awareness of roadside values, and an appreciation of those same values.

Roadsides include Railways reserves, and the Victorian Railways are represented on the committee as are the C.R.B.

The committee is mainly concerned with the broad issues of roadside conservation. Specific issues relating to a specific area are referred to the Ministry for Conservation which is the body to deal with individual issues.

Issues such as the way roadside firebreake are made and organised (new ways of making forebreaks have been suggested) , tree planting - A pilot scheme was started at Kamarooka on a rather treeless salt affected area-, conserving already existing roadside trees and vegetation, suggesting less clearing on road upgrading and fire access roads, suggesting the re-locating of planned S.E.C. transmission lines when those lines are going to mean the unnecessary loss of a roadside line of trees are all the kind of things which occupy the committee.

The committee meets at regular intervals, and Field days and Symposiums are held. One is planned for Bendigo next Spring.

Close co-opperation is sought from local bodies such as the Shire Councils and Rural Fire Brigades, and in most cases they are happy to co-operate.

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Photographer- G. Broadway

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I. The hardy group of birdwatchers at Lyal Glen.

2. An old gold mine in Jack Ipsen's front yard stirred up some interest.

3. A walk up a gully in the bush behind the property brought us to this old mine which is being reopened.

4. The owner of the mine, who emerged to greet us. At the age of 84 he had spent the whole day down the mine timbering the cross tunnel!

George Broadway and Stan Bruton went down the shaft and found it beautifuly cool, but they found no gold.

Lyal Glen Outing

The day of the outing to Lyal Glen was a very hot one but it turned dut to be one of the most interesting for a long while, partly because of the number of birds and their nests that we saw so close to the house, and partly because we had the privilege of meeting three very interesting men to whom retirement is a good oportunity to do the things they most like doing.

BIRD LIST, put together by Stan Bruton.

Olive Backed Oriole and nest. This was a very modern affair, made of shredded fibreglass tarp. and lambswool.
Willy Wagtail and nest. One was feeding the other at the nest.
Magpie. The young had just left the nest.
Rainbow birds - just a few.
Red attlebird on the nest, its mate on a nearby tree panting with the heat.
Brown Treecreeper. It wasn't nesting in its usual hollow.
Kookaburra. The nest hollow has been used for the past 25 years. Each year they go away for the winter and only one pair return.
Eastern Rosellas.
White Plumed Honeyeaters.
Mudlarks and nest.
Australian Raven.
WhiteBrowed Woodswallows nesting behind the bark in an old Yellow Box.
Grey Shrikethrush.
Rufous Whistler.
Blue Wrens.
Grey Fantail.
Yellow Rumped Thornbill.
Black Faced Cuckoo Shrike.

One of the highlights of the afternoon was the clamour of a huge flock of magpies, perhaps of 70 or more birds, at Robin Flat (so called by Roy Wheeler because of the number of Robins he saw there). The sound could be heard long before we reached the spot Which was the site of the mine mentioned on the previous page.

Another thing which we were told about, but unfortunately didn't see,was a Yellow Footed Antechinus which lives just outside the Ipsens' loungeroom window.

WEEDS OF OUR WATERWAYS No 3

Alligator Weed

Like Water Hyacinth and Salvinia, Alligator Weed originated in the tropics and subtropics of South America. It was first recorded in Florida, U.S.A. in 1894 and in Indonesia as early as 1895.

By 1906 it was growing in New Zealand but the plant was not recorded in Australia until the mid 1940s. To date it has not spread as fast throughout the tropics and subtropics as its two compatriots, perhaps because people do not favour it in their fish tanks. However it seems to be able to establish itself readily in new environments so must be a potential threat to all warm inland waters.

For a 1975 survey it was found only in three areas in Australia. The worst areas were the Georges River near Sydney and close to Williamtown near Newcastle. However another area near Holbrook poses a threat to the irrigation systems of the Murrumbidgee and Murray Rivers.

Like Water Hyacinth and Salvinia it spreads down waterways mainly by pieces being broken off and carried down to become rooted to the banks. It then grows outwards from the banks to form a floating mat, which rapidly is replaced if swept away by floods.

Terry Collins.

CAMPBELLS CREEK FROST REPORT

Plants badly affected or killed by frost:

- Melaleuca armillaris
- M. Lanceolata
- M. M. decussata
- Leptospermum citratoni
- Casuarina tortulosa
- Eucalyptus stricklandi
- Melaleuca incana
- Acacia verticillata.

Plants affected by frost;

- Melaleuca hyperiafolia
- M. bractrate
- Acacia longifolia
- Many small natives, i.e. Tetratheca.

MEETINGS

The General Meeting is held in the Education Centre on the second Friday of each month, at 8 pm. Visitors are always welcome.
Members are encouraged to bring specimens for display or identification, as well as verbal reports of things of interest seen during the month.

Friday Dec. 10
Members and Visitors Night.
Make a special effort to bring something along, perhaps up tp 6 slides, or a report of a good spot to visit?

Don't forget to bring something for supper.

There will be no outing for December.

Friday Feb 11
ANNUAL MEETING

"Where Homes are Hollow"
Slides and tape showing the use birds and animals make of tree hollows.

I would like to take the opportunity to thank all those who have contributed to the Newsletter in any way during this year. I have especially enjoyed having the childrens contributions, which have given me a fresh look at the things around us, and also their readiness to share in this way.
Also, a thank you to Ern Perkins and anyone else who helped out while I was away.

Rita Mills.
Editor.